



WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

19th District News

Winter 2003



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Dear Friends:

The 2003 Legislative Session has started, so this is a good time to touch base with you and our other neighbors.

A few months ago, Senator Sid Snyder retired after spending half a century making our state a greater place. **Residents in the 19th Legislative District and around the state are better off today because of his commitment and dedication to public service.** Legislators in both chambers, and from both political parties, surely miss his leadership.

Filling Senator Snyder's vacant seat caused a small chain reaction. County commissioners recently appointed Representative Doumit to fill the Senate position, and Brian Blake to fill the House seat left vacant by that appointment. One thing that won't change is the fact that your district delegation is committed to balanced representation for Southwest Washington.

As you know, the state budget always seems to get most of the attention. In this edition of *19th District News*, we'll review the budget and other issues we expect to face this year.

Please call or write us whenever you have comments of your own to share.

Best wishes,

Mark Doumit
State Senator
19th Legislative District

Brian Hatfield
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Brian Blake
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Senator Mark Doumit

Representative Brian Hatfield

Representative Brian Blake

◆ Budget:

Finding a real-world way out of our state's economic morass

It's a nightmare.

That's the only way to describe the Washington state budget right now. A nightmare. **There is a huge hole in the state treasury, which is the money needed to:**

- **Provide essential programs such as community safety and health care for thousands of Washington's families.**
- **Teach hundreds of thousands of Washington's students.**
- **Assure other services that matter to every one of Washington's six million people.**

These are programs and services that most citizens want their state to provide.

The ongoing national recession has undercut public revenue for the past couple of years. You may recall that the Legislature carved \$680 million from the budget last year, resulting in the layoff of more than 1,000 state employees.

Still, the recession continues. We face another set of difficult cuts to state services. As of early January, it was estimated that we will need well over \$2 billion *just to maintain existing programs and services.*

In a strategy he calls "Priorities of Government," the governor in December proposed a new, two-year budget that includes \$2.4 billion worth of cuts — and no new or increased taxes.

The governor's office reviewed every area of state-agency spending, hunting for programs and services that weren't absolutely essential state responsibilities. If a publicly financed activity couldn't make that "cut," the governor's budget proposal said: "Cut!"

It's safe to say that most of the 147 members of the Senate and House of Representatives see his ideas as, at least, a good starting point.

◆ Hands off the 19th District!

Not too many years back, a speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives uttered this pearl: "All politics is local."

During the next few months, we plan on living by a similar standard: "All budget-writing is local."

Yes, there will be cuts to the state budget — and people all over the state will feel the effects.

But we won't stand for our district taking an unfair burden of the cuts.

Any new budget we ultimately support must be fair to:

- **Young people who are just starting out.**
- **Working families who have worked years getting settled.**



Families in Long Beach and other coastal communities have plenty at stake in the new budget.

19th District News

- **Senior citizens who have invested a lifetime in making their community a better place.**

We intend to ask this question whenever anyone in Olympia comes up with a budget “answer”: “What does this idea do for — *and what does it do to* — the approximately 120,000 people who live in our 19th Legislative District?” In other words, “What’s in it — *and what’s not in it* — for our coastal and Southwest Washington counties?”



A solid education is the best investment that we could possibly ever make.

◆ **Opportunity:**

Ensuring all workers have a good shot at earning a good living

Put people first, *especially in tough economic times.*

Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Some legislators and special interests, however, try their hardest to make it hard.

But it really isn't rocket science.

When it comes to public policy, putting people first means standing up for quality economic development. It means attracting and keeping businesses that provide long-lasting, family-wage jobs. Economic development should be a major theme for any legislator. It is for us, that's for sure.

Take the regulatory process, for instance. We've each had some good success at rattling state-agency cages — and yes, there's more to do.

A good example of work still ahead is the current state policy involving fisheries permits and forest practices.

We're not talking about trashing our planet or gobbling up all our natural

Committees and Leadership:

Senator Mark Doumit

- Assistant Democratic Whip
- Ranking Democrat — Parks, Fish & Wildlife
- Natural Resources, Energy & Water
- Coastal Caucus

Representative Brian Hatfield

- Majority Floor Leader
- Transportation
- Financial Institutions & Insurance
- Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
- Rules
- Chair — Coastal Caucus

Representative Brian Blake

- Capital Budget
- Technology, Telecommunications & Energy
- Trade & Economic Development
- Coastal Caucus

resources — or whatever charge is leveled against anyone who has the nerve to work for a living. And we want to leave a safe and healthy environment for our kids and grandkids just as much as the next person.

But we'll keep demanding that economic-development policies take people into account — put people at the top of the ledger.

◆ Shorelines: Focus is on citizen rights as we review preliminary agreement

Talk about stiff opposition!

A little more than two years ago, you'll recall, the state Department of Ecology tried to ram through an update of the state's shoreline regulations.

It would be an understatement to say the department's efforts were met with stiff opposition. Many business groups, local governments and private citizens sued to put the kibosh on the proposed update.

So, representatives from the different groups involved in the shorelines disagreement — the people we mentioned above, as well as the state attorney general and some environmental folks — sat down and hammered out a compromise.

Last December, this compromise went public. **For us, the best and most important part is that it places a lot more emphasis on respecting the legal and constitutional rights of individual property owners.**

In the Legislature this year, we'll look at three approaches to resolving the shorelines issue:

- One proposal would repeal the current law that sets a 24-month-update deadline. The law would be replaced with a set of deadlines phased in through the year 2014. **This would give small, rural counties more time to update their shoreline plans.**

- Another proposal would delete the current 50-percent cap on state funding for local costs of updating shoreline programs. **This means that the state would provide much greater assistance for these updates.**
- Finally, a third approach would include \$2 million in the 2003-2005 state budget for local updates. **(The governor already included this money in his 2003-2005 budget recommendation.)**

At least one party — the Association of Washington Cities — strongly believes that local update requirements should be “null and void” if sufficient state funding isn't provided.

The preliminary agreement signed by participants in the search for a compromise also directs that shoreline programs must be coordinated with local comprehensive plans and regulations — and with other state and federal requirements.

◆ Elections: Every little bit helps when it comes to efficiency, money-saving

You've probably heard the old saying: “If you watch the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves.”

Well, we don't totally agree with that idea.

We think it's pretty good policy to keep a close eye on the dollars, too!

Scrubbing public spending is a better idea today than it has ever been, considering our budget nightmare is somewhere in the neighborhood above \$2,000,000,000 (yes, that's two billion dollars).

It's not simply a matter of slashing citizen programs and services in the budget here, and bashing citizen programs and services in the budget there.

It's about squeezing everything we can out of each dollar and cent in the budget. **Every little bit helps.**

19th District News

One bill we'll advance this year is aimed at helping local governments save money. Right now, county auditors have to rotate names of candidates that appear on local ballots.

Current Washington State law leaves the county auditors no choice: The position of names on the election ballot must be changed as many times as there are candidates for the numbered positions.

No, it doesn't cost a ton of money to print a bunch of different ballots to meet the terms of existing state law. But it isn't cheap, either.

The bill we're advocating gets rid of that requirement.

Another measure we want to pass would allow county auditors to entirely switch to absentee voting. **Each election, more people vote absentee anyway. This proposal taps that trend to save public money.**

How about this for a new "old saying": Voting should be *extensive*, not *expensive*. We're doing our best to make it a reality.

◆ Lewis and Clark: Here's a bicentennial that will mean huge tourism for our region

Let's step back nearly 200 years.

Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and the members of their famous expedition spent the winter of 1805-1806 right in our back yard.

People from all over the country, and probably all over the world, will be visiting our communities during the next few years to commemorate the Lewis and Clark expedition. So we plan on doing our part to make sure our local communities put their best foot forward.

The state's current capital budget includes money to help us prepare for this bicentennial celebration.

We'll keep working to help ensure that our communities get the biggest economic benefit from this historical bicentennial.



*Washington's
history and
natural wonders
will attract more
visitors than
ever in the next
couple years.*

Senator Mark Doumit

Representative Brian Hatfield

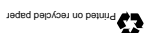
Representative Brian Blake

*Citizens have every
right to enjoy
recreation areas
and other public
facilities that they,
after all, have
helped pay for.*



Senator Mark Doumit
Representative Brian Hatfield
Representative Brian Blake

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